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Boudreau, Paul E

To: Burger, David
Subject: RE: EU Observer 7/12/06: Solana/Macedonia/El-Masri/Proxima Mission

RELEASED IN FULL

From: Orlansky, Michael D
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Cc: Shott, Brian A
Subject: EU Observer 7/12/06: Solana/Macedonia/El-Masri/Proxima Mission

This article in the Brussels-based "EU Observer" may be of some interest.
Mike

EU's Solana in fresh CIA kidnapping spotlight

12.07.2006 - 17:44 CET |

By Andrew Rettman
EUOBSERVER / BRUSSELS -

Liberal MEPs investigating allegations that the CIA has been kidnapping EU citizens want EU top diplomat Javier Solana to answer a second round of questions, after news that the EU police mission in Macedonia might have inside knowledge.

Germany's Stern magazine wrote on Wednesday (12 July) that the EU's Skopje police mission - Proxima - had high-level contacts in the Macedonian counter-espionage unit - the DBK - at the time that Macedonia allegedly handed over German citizen Khalid El-Masri to the CIA in January 2004.

But the Proxima-DBK link has never been probed, despite ongoing investigations into the El-Masri affair by the Council of Europe, the German public prosecutor and the European Parliament's ad-hoc committee, Stern magazine said.

"I think we ought to invite [Mr Solana] to appear before our committee again and ask him specifically about EU police and security missions in the Balkans," UK liberal MEP and committee deputy-chair Sarah Ludford stated. "We keep stumbling across allegations, indications that they may have had some knowledge, if not involvement," she added.

Mr El-Masri was released in May 2004, accusing EU candidate state Macedonia of the hand-over and saying US agents beat him up and flew him to Afghanistan where he faced torture.

The European Commission has stated that any government's collusion with CIA kidnappings could see serious consequences on human rights grounds under the EU Treaty.

Macedonia claims innocence

"We gave all the information we have to the German prosecutor," a Macedonian interior ministry spokesman told EUobserver. "We do not arbitrarily arrest foreign nationals. We are a free country, a democratic country."

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Mr Solana's office could not be contacted for a comment, but when Mr Solana spoke to the MEPs' CIA committee previously on 2 May he denied knowledge of any European governments' involvement in US kidnappings or "renditions."

The EU's former high representative for Macedonia - Swedish diplomat Michael Sahlin - who started work after the El-Masri affair in August 2004 also poured cold water on the speculations:

"During my term no mention of this was made by anyone of my international community or local counterparts, or bosses in Brussels," he told EUobserver. "I can't imagine Proxima could have known about it and not informed me."

Meanwhile, the European Commission reacted to the Stern story by repeating the mantra that:

"We have asked the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's authorities to cooperate fully and openly with all the investigations that are currently ongoing."

The MEPs' CIA committee has no power of subpoena over Mr Solana or anybody else and has faced criticism from EU member state governments and some of its own conservative EPP-ED group members that its work is based on flimsy evidence and is anti-American.

The committee was formed after US daily the Washington Post in November 2005 published a CIA leak about secret US prisons on EU soil.

Balkans leads

The MEPs are currently following a lead that Macedonian agents put a fake exit visa stamp in Mr El-Masri's passport before he was abducted, so that they could later claim they had nothing to do with the affair.

The committee is also keen to find out more about the role of the EU's police mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina - the EUPM - which did nothing during Bosnia's alleged handover of the so-called "Algerian six" to the CIA in January 2002.

In Kosovo, MEPs want to know why the NATO-led security force - KFOR - has done nothing to investigate reports that the US at one time ran a secret Guantanamo-bay type prison for terrorist suspects in the UN-controlled region.

"The EU went to this region to help create stability and to guarantee the respect of human rights," Ms Ludford said. "If they were involved in this [CIA programme] in any way, then we might as well pack up and go home."

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